



## 28 Wisconsin counties receive much-needed veterinary services through federal loan repayment program

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MADISON – Twenty-eight counties in Wisconsin previously underserved by veterinarians will now get some added help thanks to a federal program administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture. The Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program (VMLRP) helps provide veterinary services in rural, underserved areas by awarding loan repayment benefits to new veterinarians in exchange for a three year commitment to serve in a shortage area.

“Veterinarians are very important to America’s food safety system and to the health of both animals and humans, so we are pleased that four of the five areas that we identified in Wisconsin will benefit from the program,” said Dr. Paul McGraw, State Veterinarian for the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP).

One of the leading causes for shortages in veterinary services is the heavy cost of education which leaves graduates with average debt of more than \$135,000. To pay this off, graduates opt for jobs in higher population areas where they can receive better salaries. Shortages are more critical in rural areas and in high-priority specialties that require advanced training, such as food safety, epidemiology, diagnostic medicine and public health.

“The award recipients are required to alleviate one of three types of shortage situations. In Wisconsin, we had three areas that were experiencing a Type 1 shortage which requires at least 80 percent of the recipient’s time to provide food animal veterinary services. The other is a Type 2 shortage that requires the recipient to devote 30 percent of their time to that function,” McGraw said.

Areas of Wisconsin that will benefit from the awards are:

- Iowa County including Grant, Richland, Sauk, Dane, Green and Lafayette counties (Type 1)
- Barron, Burnette, Chippewa, Dunn, Polk, Rusk, Sawyer, St. Croix, and Washburn counties (Type 2)
- Manitowoc County including Sheboygan, Fond du Lac, Calumet, Brown and Kewaunee counties (Type 1)
- Jefferson, Dodge, Rock, Walworth, Washington, and Waukesha counties (Type 1)

Wisconsin is one of 26 states that will fill at least one shortage area through the program. Nationally, more than \$4.5 million will be paid to recipients over a three year period. Average awards are \$95,543 including loan repayment and a federal tax benefits.

More information is available about the program at <http://nifa.usda.gov/program/veterinary-medicine-loan-repayment-program>.

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